

AI Index: EUR 48/11/91

EXTERNAL

27 June 1991

@Veton SURROI

£YUGOSLAVIA

Veton Surroi, an ethnic Albanian in his late 20s or early 30s, is a leader of an opposition party in Kosovo province in the republic of Serbia. In November 1990 he announced the founding of a political party called the Parliamentary Party of Kosovo. The main aim of this party is the integration of Kosovo within Europe. The party's program stresses the right of citizens of Kosovo to make decisions about their future through the operation of a democratically elected parliament. In February 1991 this party was refused official registration by the Federal Secretariat of Justice.

Veton Surroi was among a group of ethnic Albanians, including leaders of several political parties and a local human rights committee, who organized a silent demonstration on 13 June 1991 in Pristina, the capital of Kosovo province. Up to 100,000 ethnic Albanians carried a rose-filled open coffin to Pristina cemetery in a demonstration for peace and against what they called the "violence carried out by the Serbian occupying powers". Veton Surroi is reported to have said in a speech on this occasion: "We are here to bury violence." Although public meetings are currently banned in Kosovo, the organizers of the demonstration had reportedly not sought permission to hold the demonstration. Police did not intervene and no incidents of violence were reported.

Veton Surroi was arrested on 26 June and immediately brought before a court dealing with petty offences, which sentenced him to 60 days' imprisonment, apparently on charges of having "disturbed the public peace" by organizing the demonstration of 13 June. He was immediately sent to start serving his sentence.

Amnesty International's concern: AI is concerned that Veton Surroi has been arrested and imprisoned as a result of his non-violent exercise of the right to freedom of expression and freedom of assembly. These freedoms are guaranteed in Articles 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, which was ratified by Yugoslavia in 1971. Amnesty International considers Veton Surroi to be a prisoner of conscience and is appealing to the Yugoslav authorities for his immediate and unconditional release.

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FACSIMILE COVER SHEET

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**Melanie Anderson
Research Department**